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A social and educational revolution is recasting the goals and function of schooling in the United States. Because of this, the persistent dilemmas of curriculum decision-making have become more urgent. The first dilemma deals with the problem of choosing between the virtues of community control and student-initiated curriculum making and the virtues of large-scale curriculum development. Secondly, if attention to a wide range of problems and fields of study is necessary for the personal and intellectual development of the students, how can idiosyncratic interests and aptitudes be cultivated? A third dilemma is the problem of evaluating the consequences of programs. A resolution of the latter might be to develop procedures that would secure a wide range of unobtrusive data on student behavior. (Author/MF)

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Persistent Dilemmas in Curriculum Decision-Making

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The persistent dilemmas of curriculum decision-making about which I would like to speak are not new to the field of education. Like most of the persistent problems in the field, they have been with us for years. Now, however, during a time of social and educational crisis these dilemmas have taken on a saliency that they have seldom had. In this paper, I would like to identify some of these persistent dilemmas and, in so doing, I will be baring my soul to some of the problems in curriculum which nag me and for which I have yet to find satisfying solutions. Perhaps this group can suggest ways in which these dilemmas might be resolved. Perhaps the larger question is whether or not the issues that I raise are the ones that are worth raising in the first place.

Let me start with what must be obvious to all of us here: There is emerging in this country a social and educational revolution that is recasting the goals and function of schooling, not only at levels of higher education, but at the secondary and elementary levels as well. This revolution, while having its initial impetus in the black community, is now a movement consisting of the children of the well-heeled, of conscience-ridden liberals, and of racial groups whose chroma range almost throughout the spectrum. What I see as I examine

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and reflect upon events not only on this campus, but in the high schools around Stanford and in the colleges of the nation is the emergence of a passionately committee mix of disenfranchised minority group students and intellectual-liberal-radicals who like neither what they see in the nation, nor what they have in the schools. I see individuals who once lived docile or obsequeous relationships with their teachers attempting to redefine their teachers' roles, recasting their roles as students and redefining the mission of the school. The student groups are not only concerned with the military posture of the country, they are disenchanted with an educational program that they believe has little relevance to their lives. They want, and are demanding, a say-so in the curriculum. They want to decide what they shall study and how.[1]

Now the educational goal of enabling students to define their own learning tasks and to establish their own educational aims has been a long-standing ideal among American educators. To prepare students to assume responsibility for their own educational journey, to plan their own educational program, is after all, what most of us in this room, I believe, are interested in as long-range, if not immediate consequences of schooling. The student activist in today's schools wants at the least a partnership in the process of curriculum decision-making. Many of them are objecting to content which strikes them as irrelevant to their immediate concerns, irrelevant to the proper concerns of society, and irrelevant to the type of life that they believe is worth living.

These concerns with the relevance of curriculum content is not limited to vocal students. The recent moves to decentralize the control of large city

school systems is another manifestation of the same concerns. In New York, for example, the legislature has last week passed a law which will divide New York City into 30 to 33 school districts, each having its own Board of Education and administrative organization. Black and Puerto Rican citizens are demanding more than the token influence emanating from the local PTA. They want not only curricular relevance for their children, they want to guarantee such relevance by selecting both the principals and teachers who are to work with their children. From their point of view the instructional methods that have been used in the schools, the curriculum that has been provided, indeed the pervasive attitude of the school as a social institution, has failed to facilitate the type of personal development and social mobility that parents demanding decentralized schooling are insisting upon. Some parents believe that the schools have not only failed to facilitate personal growth, they have militated against such growth. The school, in their eyes--and especially the program of the school, the curriculum--has created a pathogenic cycle whose rate and severity increase with each passing school day.

Although it is unfortunate that disenchantment with the schools has initiated the demands for control of the curriculum, the goal of enabling students to formulate their own educational purposes has been and is an aim that is prized among educators. We want, I assume, to prepare students who will become increasingly responsible for conducting their own education.

The problem that nags me as I reflect upon this orientation to curriculum decision-making deals with the problem of reconciling it with the ideal of utilizing

the best and widest array of knowledge available for deciding upon the content of school programs. On the one hand, we want students to assume responsiblity for their own educational program. They won't be in school forever. On the other hand, we want to be able to use large-scale analyses of socio-economic trends, we want to use the data developed by social forecasters, we want to employ theories of cognitive development and learning to guide us in establishing parameters for the content and aims of the curriculum.[2] The forty-three million children and youths who attend American schools are entitled to encounter educational programs that result from the application of the most sophisticated tools that we have available. The content of their programs should develop skills and ideas of enormous power and style, skills and ideas which will endure beyond the ephemeral demands of the present. To create such programs will probably require not less sophistication and insight into the processes of learning but more sophistication. How does one reconcile the need to provide local communities with the opportunity to decide what shall be taught to their children and how, and at the same time draw upon the skills and data of social scientists, curriculum specialists, and educational scholars for building educational programs? One of the tenets of rational curriculum planning calls for the use of a wide variety of specialists and a wide array of data for determining the content and organization of the curriculum. Not only are the characteristics of the students to be considered, the needs of the society, the demands of the emerging future and the nature of the fields to be encountered are all believed relevant data for curriculum planning. Curriculum

decision-making is seen as one of the most complex aspects of educational planning generally, one which when done well successfully integrates the conclusions provided by a diversified spectrum of specialized personnel. How does such conception of curriculum development square with the belief that local communities or individual students should assume the primary responsibility for deciding what shall be the object of educational attention?

That the problems of curriculum decision-making are complex and difficult is testified to by the papers and discussions that have taken place in this Conference. Are better solutions to be found in more localized curriculum making? Are teachers capable of deciding--even with the aid of students--what is worth attending to educationally? Do we prepare them with such skills? Do teachers have the appropriate array of curriculum options available to them and can they select and cope with the diversity of such options and still assume effective responsibility as teachers? It is clear that one of the assumptions underlying almost, if not all, of the national curriculum development projects has been that more educationally significant curricula could be provided in our nation's schools if programs within the various disciplines could be developed by the best minds available. Extensive financial expenditures have been made to bring such people together, to pilot test and revise prototype programs, and to train teachers to use the new curricula that have been developed. It is estimated that during the past ten-year period the National Science Foundation and the U. S. Office of Education have made available for curriculum building and in-service teacher education

over $100,000,000. All of this in the name of improved educational programs. Can one, at the same time, approach curriculum development on a large-scale national basis in which teachers adopt programs developed hundreds of miles from their classrooms with demands to localize--indeed personalize--programs for individual students? Can curriculum decision-making operate both ways? Are there ways of reconciling these apparently opposing approaches to the problems of curriculum development--each of which appears to me to have important virtues. The former view has the virtue of bringing to the classroom teacher a set of curricular materials that have been engineered by specialists who purportedly have a depth of understanding in their field of study and which presents the central and most enduring aspects of that field to the student's attention. The latter view capitalizes on the student's initiative and demands that teachers, working closely within community policy, develop programs that speak to the particular interests and needs of students in a particular social context. The ramifications of these views have profound consequences for teacher education and curriculum evaluation. These ramifications must, I am sure, be apparent. There is one aspect of the dilemma which lends it even greater complexity.

We know from demographic studies that families are moving from one home to another at an increasingly rapid rate. It is estimated, for example, that over half of the families in the country have been living in their present dwellings less than five years. What does such mobility imply for the dilemma of local

and national curriculum planning? Does one conclude that because of family mobility it is especially important for educational programs to have sufficient homogeneity that the child can pick up in his new educational locale without major "retooling"? Or does it imply that precisely because of increased family mobility local curriculum decision-making should be emphasized? The first dilemma that I will share with you deals with the apparent problem of choosing between two goods: Can the virtues of community control and student-initiated curriculum making be reconciled with the virtues of large-scale curriculum development? Perhaps this group can suggest ways of resolving this problem.

A second dilemma that nags at my educational soul deals with the age-old educational question of how balance in the curriculum shall be determined? For decades there has been a strong desire among educators, especially at the elementary school level, to provide a curriculum having "balance." While "balance" is not a term having great precision, I generally take it to mean with respect to the school curriculum that children will have access to the major intellectual and artistic disciplines that have historically been a part of our culture. It is argued by a variety of scholars--Hutchins,[3] Bestor,[4] Koerner,[5] Phenix,[6] and others--that the various major fields of enquiry constitutes a fundamental core of intellectual and artistic subject matter and that becoming educated requires an understanding and appreciation of the ideas and methods which these fields provide. Phenix has argued that the way man secures meaning from experience is by interpreting his sensations with the frames of reference, or, as Phenix calls them, the realms of

meaning, that constitute the disciplines. The program of the school--the school curriculum--it follows, if it is to provide for the development of educated men, should introduce students to the major realms of meaning and should enable them to use the ideas and modes of enquiry that constitute them.

Now the ideal of providing an educational program that will prepare students to derive meaning from experience through the diverse windows that the various arts and sciences provide is surely appealing. In a way, our schools have attempted to achieve this ideal by offering to elementary, and to some degree to secondary and college students, a range of fields and requiring that students study them. When school curricula became heavy laden with the sciences, both educators and parents became concerned that the ideal of curricular balance was being sacrificed and that educational redress be provided. In some ways the currently emerging interest in the arts and humanities is evidence of the recognition that the school curriculum has been skewed to the sciences and to mathematics and needs, therefore, to be brought back into balance.[7] Balance in the curriculum has been and is an idealized criterion for deciding upon curriculum content. Like the well-balanced diet, the well-balanced curriculum contributes to educational health.

Yet the goal of balance in curriculum is not without a lusty competitor. While school-men are concerned with balance, they also are concerned with, as Harold Benjamin called it, the cultivation of idiosyncrasy.[8] How does one insure the cultivation of idiosyncrasy while, at the same time, requiring students to study the wide range of subject matters that make for educationally balanced men? By the cultivation of idiosyncrasy I mean providing students with the opportunity to

attend deeply and extensively to the pursuit of their own aesthetic and intellectual interests. By the cultivation of idiosyncrasy, I mean not only providing such opportunities but encouraging students to seek them out and to attend to the development of those particular talents and aptitudes that differentiate one man from another. In practical terms, such an approach might mean neglecting some areas of study completely, and giving only a passing nod to others while one emerses oneself in the type of artistic or academic work that "turns one one." The committee that developed the new curriculum policy at Stanford has opted for this choice in revamping the Institution's undergraduate program. The authors of The Study of Education at Stanford[9] present their rationale this way.

> "Our faculty must be in the places where knowledge is advanced and with this comes a need in our day to specialize intensively so that the frontiers of knowledge can be reached. This demand derives, we believe, not from the so-called "publish or perish" rule of academic success, but from a complex set of motivations to travel the path of discovery. For the most part it is because faculty members are interested in the unknown or the misunderstood that they have come to the University in the first place. The intense specialization that results from this characteristic of the faculty seems to militate against the demand for "general education" in the traditional sense, with its stress on a common body of knowledge and a concomitant insistence upon a highly prescriptive curriculum. "General education" courses turn out to be an unwelcome chore for both faculty and students in a setting where teaching or learning something prescribed by a committee is rightly looked upon as the bottom of the academic barrel" . . . . . Let the objective of curricular planning be to encourage the faculty member to teach what he likes to teach and the student to learn what seems vital to him--the intellectual history of Europe in the nineteenth century rather than the history of Western Civilization, modern consciousness rather than freshman English, organizational behavior rather than introduction to sociology--and from this common freedom may emerge a form of general education far better suited to the characteristics of the University than to that to which we pay lip service now."[10]

It is clear in which direction the authors of The Study of Education at Stanford have moved. Both teacher and student should, in their view, be free to select their own areas of interest for teaching and learning. Is such an orientation to curriculum viable for American secondary schools? The advocates of this conception of curriculum content believe that the problem of securing breadth of understanding can be resolved by getting students to immerse themselves in the areas of study which are particularly interesting to them. Specialization, they hold, is not contrary to the development of broadly based intellectual interests. By an understanding of a particular field in depth, the student will somehow come to appreciate the wider array of intellectual tools and artistic achievements that constitute man's cultural past and which enable him to secure significant meaning from the present.

At first blush, this position has an undeniable attractiveness. A depth understanding of a field of study can have aesthetic as well as merely instrumental consequences. For the specialist, specialized understanding is probably the only "real" way to understand and appreciate the power and elegance of ideas. Yet, I am not convinced by the thesis that specialization breeds general understanding or that it cultivates an appreciation of the variety of ways in which meaning can be secured. I am painfully aware of my own ignorance to reconcile the claim that general appreciation emanates from specialized intellectual focus. And frankly, in general, I am not impressed with the level of intellectual catholicity that my specialized colleagues possess. Thus, the second dilemma: If attention to a wide range of problems and fields of study is necessary for the type of personal and

intellectual range one wishes to develop in students, how then can one cultivate, in depth, those idiosyncratic interests and aptitudes which almost all students have.

One putative solution to this dilemma has emerged rather recently and it deals with the ideal of fostering high-level cognitive processes in students.[10] It is claimed by some that what needs attention in the school is the development of curricula that facilitate problem-solving skills, curricula which enable children to exercise those cognitive abilities that will enable them to cope effectively with problems no matter what the source or mode of presentation. The development of general enquiry skills for some seem to provide the answer for curricula that in their view is subject bound. This too does not appear to me to resolve the issue. Problems come in various shapes, sizes and media. General process development, like contentless form, is something which I, at least, cannot conceive of. The problems and processes involved in painting and in writing poetry, even to take two art forms as examples, are of different orders. If they were not, poets would be painters and vice versa. Generalized process development unrelated to the characteristics and demands of the particular medium of perception and expression do not appear to me to hold promise for resolving the dilemma of curricular balance. How can we develop educational programs that give students an appreciation for the reach of man's mind and, at the same time, enable him to savor the experience that comes from study in depth of a particular field?

A third dilemma in curriculum decision-making that I would like to share with you deals with the problem of evaluating the educational consequences of the

programs we construct or endorse. One view of evaluation holds for the necessity for formulating precise objectives for the curriculum, objectives which unambiguously specify the behavior of students after having undergone a series of learning experiences.[11] Some writers on curriculum go so far as to suggest a procedure whereby all behaviors are to be identified and evaluated after each unit of instruction.[12] Such a procedure makes the goals of the curriculum precise and provides clear standards against which to appraise the effectiveness of the curriculum that is being employed. Clarity is salutory, it can increase educational responsibility and eliminate much of the fuzziness that is characteristic of large quantities of educational literature. As long as goals remain defuse curriculum makers can escape responsibility for the programs they produce. Clarity, specificity, precision--these are generally thought to be the necessary ingredients of effective curriculum development. In addition to these virtues, clarity of objectives make it possible to identify causal relationships between outcomes and treatment. In so doing, it enables one to establish generalizations concerning act and consequence in curriculum and thus contributes to our understanding of educational processes.

Associated with this conception of the role of objectives in evaluation is the general belief that product evaluation occur at the end of the instructional sequence. Most generally this occurs at the end of the semester or course of study. The practices of specifying the objectives of the curriculum and evaluating to determine whether they have been attained rests on the assumption that it is important to know

where you are going in curriculum, that you determine through evaluation at the end of an instructional sequence whether you have arrived, and that such data provides evidence of the significance or impact of the curriculum. It is implicitly assumed that evidence of terminal behavior has predictive validity for behaviors to be manifested at a later date.

Notwithstanding the recent array of criticism regarding the limitations of behavioral objectives and the evaluation practices related to such a conception, one can hardly deny the virtue of having at least some relatively clear conception of desired outcomes, as well as the virtue of evaluating in light of those conceptions.[13] We do have, it seems to me, as curriculum developers some responsibility for what we do to students through the programs we build. We do have a responsibility to try to find out what the consequences of our programs are.

Yet despite the virtues of having at least some objectives which are clearly held and evaluating in relation to them, I am nagged by the belief that assessing student behavior at the end of the instructional unit does not really predict how he is likely to behave, or think, or experience, outside the classroom. Grades, as symbols of evaluations, are admittedly the best predictors we have of school performance, but I am not convinced that they predict what is intellectually significant outside of school. If we look to the student's out-of-school performance, and if we wait a significant period of time after the course is completed to observe his behavior--for surely we are not merely interested in immediate post-course behavior--

we have a hard time associating the causes of his behavior to the effects of the curriculum. Indeed, the longer we wait, the more difficult the association becomes. Thus, the bind of being interested in achieving through the curriculum significant personal and social consequences and yet finding it more difficult to account for such consequences the more removed the student is from the program in which he studied.

The resolution of this dilemma might be found in more artful and comprehensive approaches to evaluation. I do not have a full-blown resolution to this problem but I would like to conclude my paper by suggesting an approach that might prove profitable.

It seems to me that it might be useful to develop procedures that would secure a wide range of unobtrusive data on student behavior in settings that more closely approximate, than schools do now, those that the student will find when he leaves school.[14] This means several things for curriculum evaluation. First, it means that the environment of the school be changed sufficiently so that the types of interests and abilities that are developed through the school can be displayed in it. This seldom occurs at present because of the type of social and intellectual constraints schools as social organizations place upon students. Schools might well develop parameters that more closely approximate the type of social reality that students have in out-of-school settings.

Second, data gathering mechanisms in the form of unobtrusive measures and other types of tracking procedures need to be developed to provide a much more

comprehensive picture of where students are in relation to where they have been and to where they appear to be going. These new procedures will require a far greater emphasis on the development of skills of clinical criticism among teachers than we currently emphasize either in the training of teachers or in the area of evaluation.[15] Clinical assessments are somehow considered suspect; they contain "none" of the objectivity that comes from examining the Kuder-Richardson 20. Yet the teacher sees an infinitely wider range of evidence than any achievement test now published provides. Such observation when refined and critical needs to hold a greater not, in my estimation, a lesser place in curriculum evaluation.

Third, we will need to learn how to sythesize the data secured from such diverse procedures to create a meaningful evaluation mosaic for both the student and the group. Putting together such data is a synthetic art. It will require an approach and a set of skills that are now absent in the evaluation literature. I do not have, at this time, specific suggestions to make regarding the way this synthesis might be accomplished; I believe that our current approaches to educational evaluation--even some of the new concepts in the field--are far from adequate nets for capturing the educational outcomes of schooling. New modes of evaluation resting upon new assumptions need development. I have tried to suggest one approach.

In this paper, I have attempted to share with you some of the dilemmas that puzzle me as I reflect upon curriculum decision-making. The first dilemma dealt with the virtues of local control of curriculum versus the virtues of large-scale curriculum planning. The second dealt with the dilemma of curriculum balance.

The third with relationship between clarity and short-term evaluation and the possibility of developing more comprehensive and richer, but perhaps less objective evaluations of the students development. The problems these dilemmas pose are, for me, difficult ones. I wish I had some neat answers. I do not. Perhaps the discussion and the respondent's comments will lighten my load. I eagerly await your observations.